

# Town rules should be followed; even by councillors

Last week, Halton Hills Council made a bad decision.

They granted a rezoning and an Official Plan amendment to the Country Lane Video property on the 10th Line, owned by Dave Tarzwell, despite the fact that it is contrary to the Region's designation.

Despite the fact that the Town's and Region's Planning Departments and solicitor have stated unequivocally that it should not be done.

Now, it leaves the door open for either Halton Region or area residents opposed to the rezoning to challenge Town Council's decision at the Ontario Municipal Board.

Councillors argued that since Tarzwell had already been operating his business for the past two years (before the Bylaw Enforce-

## Opinion

By STUART JOHNSTON

ment Office was made aware of the zoning transgression) they should favor the application.

To be fair, Tarzwell's businesses such as his video store, batting cages, mini-putt, et al are not the issue. He offers a unique attraction that many people enjoy.

What is at stake here is the process that Town Council followed in order to complete Tarzwell's application.

Councillor Joe Hewitt reasoned that the area "is in transition;" therefore the rezoning should be granted, despite the Region's legal opposition to it.

That may be so, but councillors are thumbing their noses at the "process," almost daring Halton Region to take action. The very same process, mind you, that they hide behind when defending their actions.

In other controversial issues, such as the proposals for Silver Creek Valley, politicians and bureaucrats alike have argued they are vigilantly "following the process" for all projects. They insist they cannot deviate from standard operating procedures at all, because it would violate the Planning Act.

And that's fine. But Town Councillors should not have the liberty to change the process whenever it suits them.

We need some consistency here, folks.

The Planning Act, Regional and

local Official Plans, and zonings are all in place for a reason. To make sound, reasonable planning and development decisions in a consistent, acceptable manner.

Or so councillors keep telling us.

There is also a process in place where any group or individual can lobby to have the zoning or designation changed in order to accommodate a development. One submits an application, and let it run the gauntlet through bureaucratic channels.

In theory, at least, this should prevent ad hoc decisions from being made on a piecemeal basis.

Councillors Gerald Rennie, Norm Elliott and Al Cook stood together and voiced their opposition, and were bang on with their criticisms of their colleagues' decision.

As Rennie put it, it is not "a wise thing to tinker with our Official Plans in order to accommodate — we must do what is right no matter what."

Rennie believed council was attempting to make "an illegality legal," and insisted that "what we are doing is wrong."

Council cannot afford to set a precedent of sorts by violating its own planning principles. That may open the door for other, similar proposals — and then what choice does council have?

On a different note, for the past few years, councillors have openly stated they must restrict their spending to a minimum, because taxpayers can no longer afford to subsidize every little thing. Should the Region challenge council's decision at the Ontario Municipal Board, how much of a needless expense will that hearing be?

Even one dollar is too much.

## MP criticizes NDP budget

In a brief Thursday to the Queen's Park committee holding hearings into the budget, Halton-Peel MP Garth Turner warned that a tax revolt is gaining steam.

The provincial government's recent high deficit budget will assure Ontarians of substantial future tax increases, less investment leading to lost jobs and higher mortgage and loan rates, Turner said in a press release.

Cross border shopping and the Ontario Taxpayers' Coalition are growing in strength due primarily to the budget, said Turner. He warned that Ontario is repeating the same economic mistakes made by Ottawa during the last recession and predicts that the province will, as a result, be crippled with an institutionalized debt and spiralling taxes.

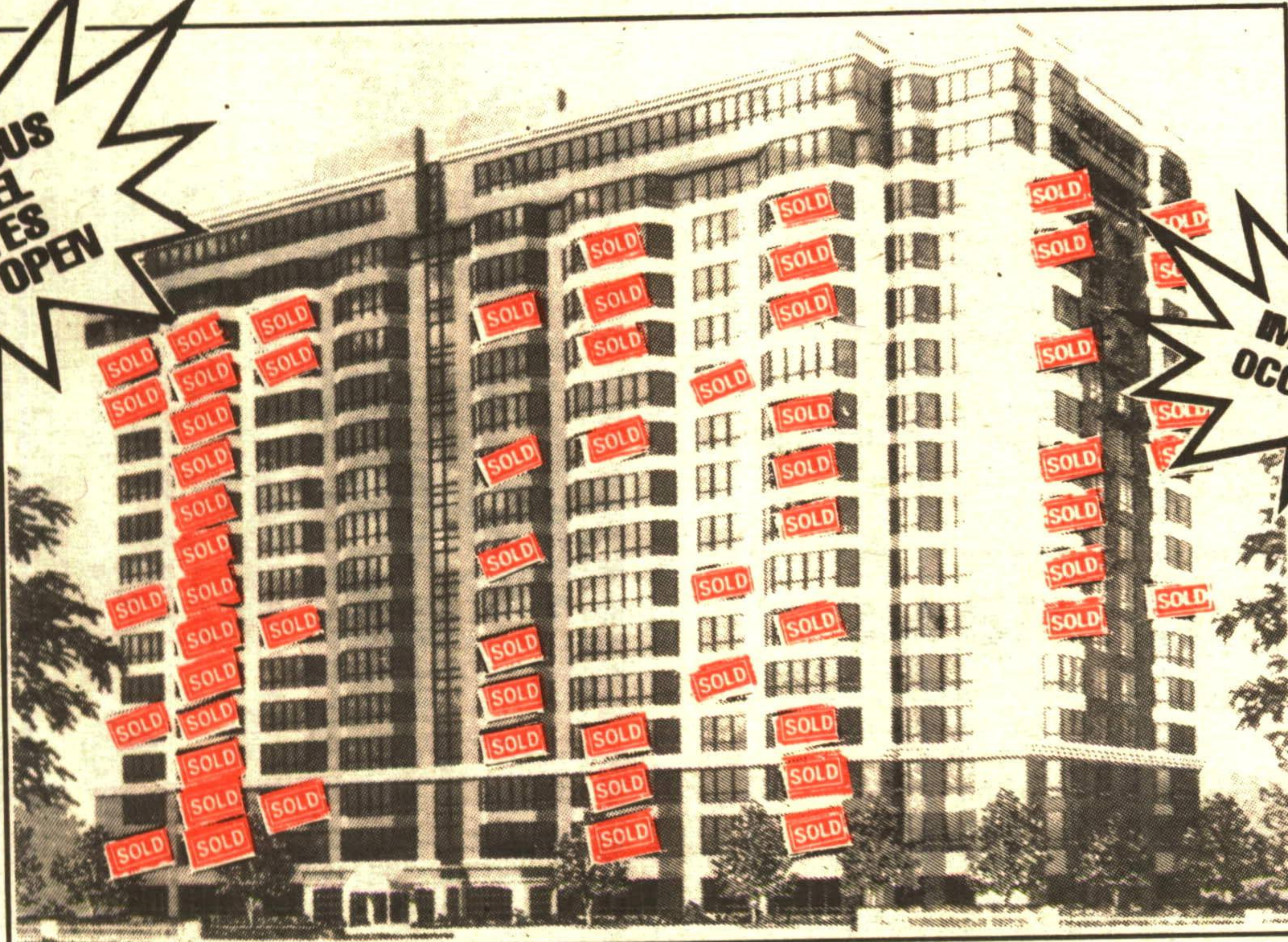
The MP predicted the Ontario budget will have national implications, "as vastly increased government spending propels inflation beyond targets adopted by the Bank of Canada."

## Wiring overloaded

Approximately \$400 damage occurred after a small fire broke out in a Guelph St. home in Georgetown Wednesday night. According to the Fire Department, several light extension cords spliced together severely overloaded and caused the fire. No injuries were reported.

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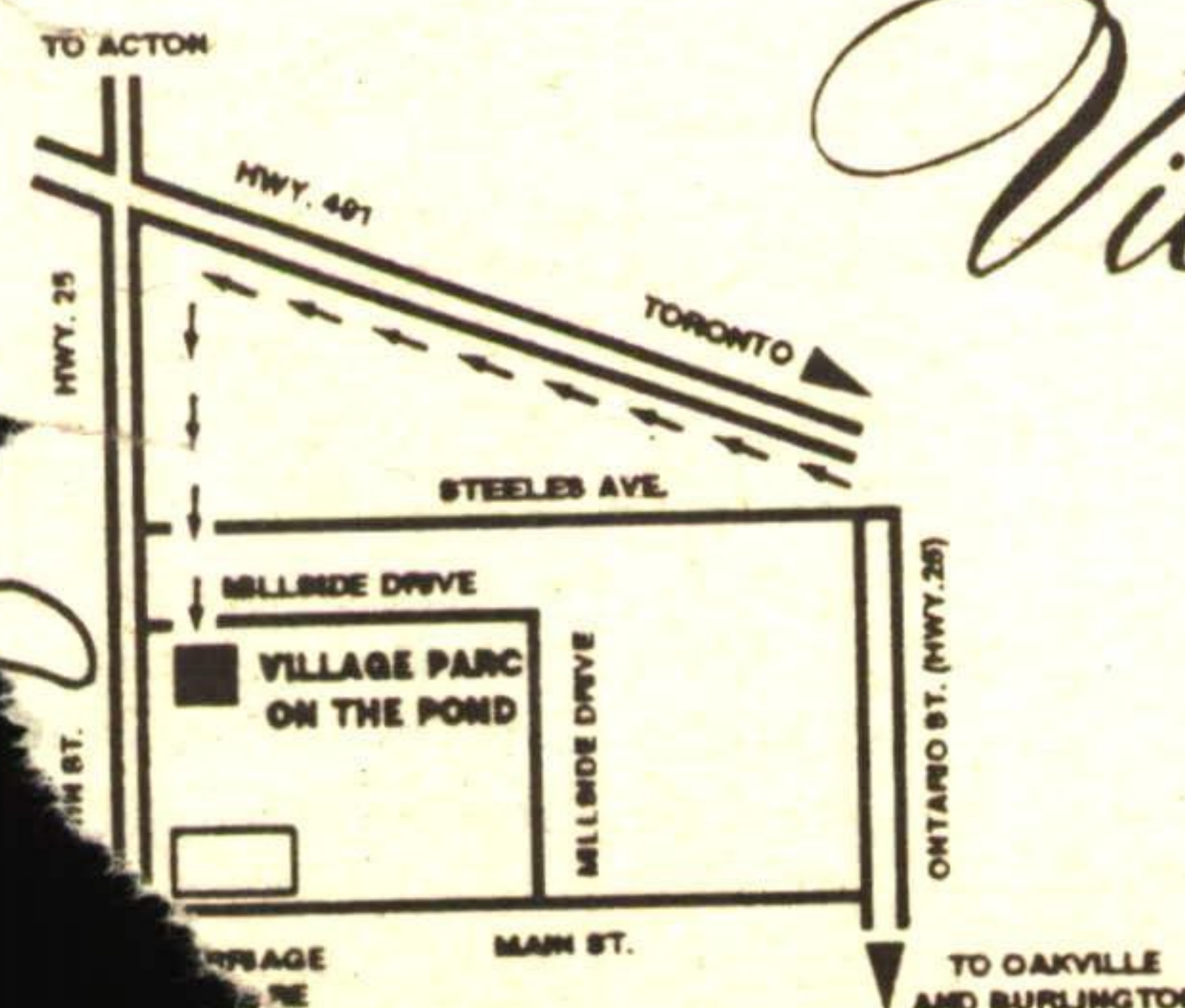
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